

A Great Plains Reader

ISSN 0003-4827

Copyright © 2004 State Historical Society of Iowa. This article is posted here for personal use, not for redistribution.

Recommended Citation

"A Great Plains Reader." *The Annals of Iowa* 63 (2004), 82-82.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.10777>

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](#)

This complaint should in no way detract from the value of *An Uncommon Time*. The essays are well written and thoroughly researched. If nothing else, the 12 essays show us that northerners were reminded in a myriad of ways during the conflict that there was indeed "a war on."

A Great Plains Reader, edited by Diane D. Quantic and P. Jane Hafen. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003. xxii, 730 pp. Notes, index. \$70.00 cloth, \$35.00 paper.

Reviewer Amanda Rees is visiting assistant professor of geography and recreation at the University of Wyoming. Her dissertation was "Envisioning the Great Plains: Contemporary Narratives of the Landscape" (University of Kansas, 1998).

You know a book is useful when you employ it in your classroom before you've finished reviewing it. *A Great Plains Reader* is such a text. The editors' aim of exploring historical and contemporary Great Plains experience through regional authors and authors who write about the region is well met. Divided into five sections and an epilogue, the text explores the Lay of the Land, New Comers, Arriving and Settling In, Adapting to a New Country, and Great Plains Community. The editors thoughtfully introduce each author and suggest further readings. They mix classic Plains writers (Hamlin Garland, Mari Sandoz, and Black Elk), with recent writers (Kathleen Norris, Wes Jackson, and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn). Although the Plains core is defined as Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, the Dakotas, southern Alberta, and Saskatchewan, the text does occasionally stray into more typical midwestern territory, including Minnesota and Iowa.

Four dominant themes thread through the text: the environment, regional in-migration, ethnicity, and survival. The editors missed a potential fifth theme: out-migration. The lack of migrant voices—people who choose this region but, due to environmental and economic hardship, leave—creates a deep and silent pool. Whether it is the late 1880s, 1930s, or the present day, out-migration profoundly shapes the Plains, from the material culture of abandoned homesteads to their untold stories swirling around each derelict building. Because of the often unique challenges this region presents its inhabitants, out-migration is a critical regional component. With that caveat noted, this text remains a rich, extensive, moving, and much needed collection of Plains voices.

Copyright of *Annals of Iowa* is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.